

LETTER FROM THE CAPITAL

Tokyo, End of April, 1942.

There is no definite news yet about the time of departure of the British and American diplomats and their families from Japan. Rumor had it early in April that they would leave by the end of the month, but while the discussions with America (through a neutral power) were practically concluded some time ago, Japan, at the time of writing, was still waiting for Britain's final answer. Apparently the British Government is just now occupied with matters of greater importance. The Swiss Legation, in these days probably one of the busiest foreign missions in Tokyo, recently had a notice in the *Japan Times* asking all Americans who have not yet done so to get in touch with it regarding the question of repatriation. So far no such announcement has appeared concerning the British. Those belonging to the "official family" are living in the huge, beautiful compound of the British Embassy opposite the Imperial Palace, spending the long hours and days of waiting playing bridge, croquet, or badminton.

The ground, by the way, on which the British Embassy stands, ceased a few weeks ago to be a "perpetual leasehold." In other words, it is no longer "freehold," and in future tax will have to be paid on it. The same applies to the ground of every other Embassy and Legation, as decreed by the Japanese Government. For Japan it was, of course, a question of honor rather than money that caused her to take this step. Here too, England and America were the first countries who, about the middle of the last century, coerced Japan to agree to "perpetual leaseholds"—a paraphrase for cession of Japanese territory; and the other countries, as a matter of mistaken prestige, followed suit.

April is election month, and when these lines appear in print the result will be known. Even now, however, there can be no doubt that a majority of candidates nominated or approved of by the National Movement for Assisting the Throne will be elected.

With so much exciting news from all the war fronts it is but natural that the election campaign has been a rather quiet one. The population of these islands knows how to observe discipline in times of stress. Nevertheless, the interest in the renovation of the Second Chamber was undiminished through all these weeks of election speeches and campaigning.

It is, perhaps, not a coincidence that election day (April 30) falls into the period of the Grand

Festival of the Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo. More than ever will this year's celebration be an act of worship and profound gratitude towards those who unhesitatingly gave their lives for His Imperial Majesty and for their country. Since last year a great many officers, soldiers, and sailors who made the supreme sacrifice have been added to those who were deified, and there will be an endless procession of organizations and neighborhood associations as well as of individuals to worship and to pay their respects to the ancestral spirits. Profane though it may sound in this connection, the simultaneousness of election day will undoubtedly augment the electorate's moral obligation.

I recently paid a visit to the soldiers' shrine of Yasukuni, where big preparations for the event were already in progress. The long avenue leading to the main shrine is flanked on both sides by mammoth paintings depicting the most important battles of the present war. One of the most imposing pictures, approximately two hundred and fifty to three hundred feet long and about twenty feet high, shows the audacious Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. All in all, it is a lesson in history on a grand scale. Japan is very proud of her dead war heroes, and there will be worshipping, but no mourning at the Yasukuni Shrine.

On Saturday, April 18, we had our first air raid. If I had not heard the official radio announcement during the midst of the attack, I, like most others, would not have known that a raid on Tokyo was taking place. In fact, the whole affair was so inconspicuous that everybody thought the alarm to be merely the signal for the customary air raid practice. Whatever excitement there developed later on was in the nature of curiosity, and there was no apprehension to be noticed anywhere. The large noon-day crowds in the streets stopped to gaze at the brilliant blue sky swept by formidable Japanese fighters. Although I looked hard and long, I did not manage to discover any of the attackers.

Remaining calm and collected throughout, Ochiyo-san, my chief amah, who is the air-raid warden for our house, kept watch during my absence. She undoubtedly received great assistance from my six-year-old daughter, who, although not quite as detached, was still roaming about the garden hours later. I found her there armed with a long bamboo stick and determined to beat down the enemy planes. —A.L.

